

THE WESTERN FRONT

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Students push Western to "Shred the Contract" with Aramark

Dining service's ties to the prison industry, record of labor exploitation are among factors for student discontent

Ashley Lockett

THE WESTERN FRONT

As Western's 10-year contract ends with Aramark in 2021, students are rallying against its renewal.

The Students for Sustainable Food club's Shred the Contract campaign petition has gained over 1,000 signatures.

With Aramark being one of the many corporations for food distribution for college campuses, along with Sodexo and Bon Appetit, concerns have been raised by students about its history across the nation.

In an open letter to the administration in 2017, Students for Sustainable Food addressed the issues they had with Aramark, such as its ties to the prison industry and mistreatment of employees.

According to the letter, "Aramark's strong ties to the prison-industrial complex, lack of transparency and accountability and track record of labor exploi-



In a letter to the administration, students addressed Aramark's history with underpaying its employees and attempting to prevent workers from organizing. // Photo by Roisin Cowan-Kuist

tation do not reflect the beliefs and values of Western students, staff, faculty and administration."

Junior Abby Ernest-Beck, a member

of the Shred the Contract campaign, said a group of students, including her, first started out in Students for Sustainable Food and has since

branched out to form its own committee.

"We kind of realized it was bigger and the people who were interested in this campaign were not neces-

sarily the same people who were interested in SSF, so it made sense to split off into two separate groups,"

See ARAMARK, pg. 3

New dean aims for transparency and open communication



Brent Carbajal says Paredes' leadership experience was the deciding factor for her appointment as the new dean. // Photo by Colton Redtfeldt

Colton Redtfeldt
THE WESTERN FRONT

Paqui Paredes Méndez has been appointed dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Paredes will begin her term on July 23, according to an article in Western Today. She will serve a fixed two-year term.

Paredes is a Spanish professor and chair of Western's Department of Modern and Classical Languages. She also served as co-chair of Western's Strategic Planning Committee

for 18 months, according to Western Today. She has worked at Western for 16 years.

Her appointment was decided on the leadership experience she gained while serving on those committees, Brent Carbajal, Western's provost and vice president for academic affairs, said in an email.

"My work as a member and co-chair of the Strategic Planning Committee has allowed me to gain an overall vision of the university

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■ Ski to Sea relay race is on the horizon. // pg. 14



Western Reads committee makes its selection under new director

Brooklin Pigg
THE WESTERN FRONT

The first time a student arrives at Western, they aren't promised friendship, but they are guaranteed a new book.

Through the program Western Reads, students, staff and faculty members can suggest a book to be featured in the upcoming school year. Western Reads Director Molly Ware said the choice for the next academic year is "Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements."

"Octavia's Brood" is a collection of short stories written by activists, classified as speculative fiction.

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An audience member crowd surfs with the help of some friends during local rock band Step Dads' performance at the Bellingham Arts & Music Festival on Saturday, May 12. Nicknamed BAMF by organizers and attendees, the festival was held at the Lookout Arts Quarry, a 10-minute drive from Bellingham. BAMF is a 24-hour annual event that showcases local artists, musicians and workshops from around the Pacific Northwest. // Photo by Roisin Cowan-Kuist

AS board meeting update

Julia Berkman
THE WESTERN FRONT

The health services fee and the Outdoor Center assessment were on the agenda at the Associated Students Board of Directors meeting on Friday, May 11.

Health services fee

Counseling, Health and Wellness Services is requesting a 7 percent increase in the health services fee for this coming academic year. The proposed increase would raise the fee from \$318 to \$339, which is a \$21 increase, Janet McLeod, the Counseling, Health and Wellness business manager, said.

The extra funding would go toward salary increases and benefits for staff and faculty, according to the proposal.

According to the proposal, the health services fee is higher at Western

than Evergreen State College, but Washington State University is even higher. WSU recently renovated its facilities, which is why its fee is much higher, Kunle Ojikutu, the assistant vice president for enrollment and student services, said.

The Outdoor Center

AS Assessment Coordinator Max Nelson outlined the Outdoor Center's assessment of their needs and goals for the following year.

"It's like a pendulum. We're either dealing budget cuts or then, years after that, trying to reinstate things."

Janet McLeod

Counseling, Health and Wellness business manager

The fee also increased last year.

"It's like a pendulum. We're either dealing budget cuts or then, years after that, trying to reinstate things," McLeod said.

The OC is trying to add more equipment and space to their office, as well as restructure their positions.

Among other things, the OC is requesting that there be winter clothes and ski

and snowboarding helmets for rent.

Nelson said it was odd that the OC would stock bike helmets but not ski or snowboarding helmets.

Another point on the assessment was creating more streamlined training for OC staff members on subjects from diversity to bike maintenance.

One goal of the assessment is to open a community-oriented center within or around the OC. Right now, there is one couch in the OC that students can use. The assessment proposes a bona fide lounge be built or sectioned off in the OC.

Future AS Vice President of Academic Affairs Levi Eckman said because it's so far from main campus, the OC should work on outreach to students in order to make sure that a lounge is necessary.

The
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**Have story ideas?
Email us at**

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to send them our way or discuss sharing information confidentially.

Corrections:
In last week's issue, we misprinted the date of the Birchwood rally incorrectly. It was held on Monday, May 7, not Monday, May 5.

Students collaborating to build first student-led tiny house

Grace McCarthy
THE WESTERN FRONT

Western's first tiny house is on schedule for completion by summer 2019, the first in a growing program that has organizers looking for volunteers across campus and majors.

Project Zero Net Energy Tiny House (ZeNETH), a student-led venture housed by the Institute for Energy Studies, is building a tiny house to offer a potential solution for affordable housing while implementing sustainable practices.

Senior Kellen Lynch is the project manager of ZeNETH.

"I believe we should be compelled to innovate and change things all around us if we're seeing issues," Lynch said. "But doing it in a mindful way, not just going out and reshuffling the world based on our image."

ZeNETH team members presented their funding proposal to Western's Sustainable Action Fund on Friday, May 11.

The SAF Grant Program provides funding to student-driven programs that promote educational and sustainable

projects which benefit the campus, according to the Western Sustainability website.

Receiving grant approval would finance an expected \$41,000 to \$45,000 cost of building materials, which would pay for almost all of the house, except for parts like the sink and bed, Lynch said.

Many parts of the project are ready to move forward, Lynch said, but ZeNETH is waiting on approval from on-campus offices.

He said ZeNETH has received positive feedback from these offices, but nothing is guaranteed.

As the project progresses, ZeNETH is working to make the team more diverse and include majors from all over Western.

"One of the harder parts of this project, and more rewarding parts at the same time, is making our project team representative of the student body at Western," Lynch said.

Lynch wanted the project to be something everyone could identify with, and he said he is excited to watch people of dif-



Interior rendering of ZeNETH's design. The tiny house will feature a sleeping loft, kitchen and a washer/dryer unit. // Photo courtesy of Project ZeNETH

ferent backgrounds and skill sets become part of the team.

The team has exponentially grown from less than 15 members in March to around 22 members, Lynch said.

Political science, sociology and energy policy majors are just a few of the many repre-

sented on the team.

Lynch presented updates on ZeNETH at the Huxley College Speaker Series on April 5.

Junior Molly Gross first met Lynch at the speaker series and began working as student engagement lead for ZeNETH one week later.

Gross said she is reaching out to Western's community to get different departments involved.

She said she is preparing Instagram posts about ZeNETH to take over OurWestern's account for the month of June. OurWestern is an Instagram and Snapchat account where Western students, staff or faculty can apply to run the posts for one month.

Gross said her experience on this project will give her skills that will be valuable after graduation.

"It's a lot of teamwork and a lot of just getting the work done because you care about it, not because you want the grade or because you're getting paid," Gross said.

The design is getting closer to its final stages, but there are

still many little changes being made, senior Noah Lanphear, the design lead, said.

He said the initial designs focused on making the house net zero, meaning the house would produce as much energy as it receives from the solar grid.

Now, more focus is being made on the experience and aesthetic of the home, Lanphear said.

The design team is brainstorming with sustainability methods that push the standards of what exist now, Lanphear said. Mushrooms, known as mycelium, are being considered as insulation, he said.

"Tiny houses aren't a new idea," Lanphear said. "We're not trying to say we came up with the tiny house concept. We're trying to come up with our own idea of what smaller, more efficient, more sustainable living can look like."

Lynch encourages anyone and everyone to bring their skills to the project.

"We're not special people," Lynch said. "We're just going the extra mile."



Exterior rendering of ZeNETH's zero net energy house. The house will produce as much energy as it uses over a year's time. // Photo courtesy of Project ZeNETH

ARAMARK
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Ernest-Beck said.

Since forming its own committee, Shred the Contract has reached out to university officials, including Director of University Residences Leonard Jones, and held separate club meetings that are dedicated to the campaign's cause.

Although this campaign to separate from Aramark's food system is relatively new at Western, the issue has struck chords with other universities around the nation, such as Florida International University where a student posted a petition calling for a change in food

provider online over two years ago.

Though there are other issues listed in the letter protesting Aramark at Western, the issue of the prison industrial complex that Aramark is said to participate in is one of the campaign's main points of focus.

"[Aramark is] making money off this very problematic institution and then, in addition, the food they're providing is very low-quality and causing a lot of health problems and human rights problems," Ernest-Beck said.

The treatment of Aramark's employees is also questioned in the letter. The company has over 200,000 employees, according to its website.

The letter to Western's administration addressed the case of Ana Ebanks, who was fired from her 10-year job at Aramark after missing 40 minutes of work due to class, according to the petition's webpage.

According to the letter, Aramark has been documented to underpay their employees and attempted to prevent workers from organizing.

Katy Vandewalker, a former Aramark employee at Western, said the company's management is not held up to the standards it should be.

Vandewalker said she wasn't given thorough training and wasn't told about taking the temperature of the food until about a month

in. "I was pretty surprised I hadn't been told that earlier," Vandewalker said.

She also said many co-workers would repeatedly arrive at work sick.

"I know people came to work sick a lot," Vandewalker said. "I had several co-workers who would talk about that all the time and they just sort of came to work sick because they didn't want to have to ask to get their shift covered, because it was hard."

The Shred the Contract Campaign webpage encourages Western to start operating its own dining system when its deal with Aramark runs out in 2021.

"That would be better because we would have a lot

more flexibility with how we manage the dining system," Ernest-Beck said. "There would be a lot more transparency and opportunity for student input."

Ernest-Beck said that the campaign officially started within the last year. The decision-making process for Western officials has yet to begin, Paul Cocks, director of communications and marketing, said in an email.

"A campus dining group composed of students, staff and faculty, chaired by Leonard Jones, director of University Residences, will organize and begin discussion 18 months out from the contract cancellation — or February 2020," Cocks said.

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Outdoor Center working to make programs more accessible

Mia Steben

THE WESTERN FRONT

Western's Outdoor Center is making changes.

With only one piece of accessible equipment, staff members are sparking conversation about how to make their programs more accessible for differently-abled students.

They want to incorporate more adaptive equipment into the outdoor activities and experiences they provide for students, senior Kelly Oberbillig, marketing resources coordinator for the Outdoor Center, said.

Oberbillig said she hopes she can start a dialogue about the limitations on access to outdoor activities for those who have disabilities.

"There's so much we can do as an organization," Oberbillig said. "If we can just help to shift the perspectives of people in their everyday lives and how they interact with people with disabilities and how they perceive their limitations, that's a step in the right direction."

Spokesperson Danielle Watson spoke at an Outdoor Center event at Western, detailing her experience with a disability. Watson sustained severe injuries in an accident, which left her paraplegic.

After her accident, Watson said she was able to become an active rock climber and distance cyclist. With her new



Hikers make the steep climb up the Sehome Hill Arboretum. These types of trails make outdoor activities inaccessible for students with disabilities. // Photo by Roisin Cowan-Kuist

perspective on accessibility, she said she discovered the importance and value of outdoor accessibility.

Watson said she was able to participate in adaptive sports, activities that are slightly altered to allow individuals with disabilities to participate.

"Adaptive sports kept me going and was a major part of my recovery," Watson said.

As a graduate student, Watson said she assumed the school wouldn't have any activities she would be able to participate in, so she never

explored options.

Watson has worked to encourage institutions like Western to inform students with disabilities about the opportunities and accommodations they have available.

Watson said it isn't always easy to speak about accessibility issues. She said she always has to advocate for herself.

"Anything that people can do when they notice if something is not accessible is to say something," Watson said. "It really helps."

She said adding accessible equipment to the center's in-

ventory won't be cheap, but it would be a huge step up.

"It is expensive to get hand cycles and skis, but wow... it would be so crucial to that population," Watson said.

Oberbillig said there are a lot of people who are passionate about getting an accessibility movement started.

"That's an area of opportunity where, if we continue conversations in the following years, we can see real change," she said.

Oberbillig said she was also hopeful about a program happening at Lakewood.

Frederick Collins, assistant director for the outdoor recreation, said he has several steps to help bring accessibility at Lakewood.

He said that the Disability Office helped with the purchase of a hand cycle. This equipment allows individuals to utilize their arms instead of their legs.

Collins said they are looking into parking access that meets the Americans with Disability Act requirements at Lakewood and working with the manager to install a lift that would help people get in and out of the water.

"We're willing to meet, talk, buy and do whatever people want us to do because that's our goal," Collins said. "[We want] to make sure that this new department of outdoor recreation under me is as equitable and open as it can be."

The Outdoor Center can help facilitate the needs of students, but it cannot be done without a conversation and advocacy, Oberbillig said.

"It's really the power of student voices," Oberbillig said.

Collins encouraged an open flow of communication between the center and the administration.

"If people need help from us, they are going to get it," he said. "Come in, tell us what you want, tell us what you don't want and let's talk."

READ

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One of the committee members, instructor Susanne Seales, said this genre deals with topics and themes that address multiple, real issues in a fictionalized setting.

"It's definitely relatable to both fantasy and sci-fi," Seales said. "But here you put all of that dystopian, scary stuff that you get with sci-fi with hopeful threads woven into it."

Compiled by two editors, Walidah Imarisha and Adrienne Maree Brown, "Octavia's Brood" was named after Octavia Butler, an award-winning science fiction writer who died in 2006, Seales said.

"She carved out a niche for herself as a woman of color in a genre that, when she started publishing, was mainly white and male," Seales said.

Ware said Octavia Butler has had an incredible impact working for social justice. Butler has opened spaces for the possibilities and struggles involved in creating a better future, which is what this book is doing as well.

Ware said she hopes "Octavia's Brood" provides a supportive lens for first-year students and marginalized students to understand and thrive during this transition.

"I believe their experimental approach can help us, as a campus, create spaces to engage in the complex and fraught struggle for change alongside hope, to step out of binaries and into the painful and beautiful process of transformation that creating a better world always entails," Ware said in an email.

By choosing this book, Seales said they thought it would spark more cross-campus dialogue.

Sophomore Robbie Bernstein was in Seales' First-year Interest Group last year. During the class, they referred to the Western Reads pick "Between the World and Me" by Ta-Nehisi Coates.

"I think Ta-Nehisi Coates' experience is really interesting," Bernstein said. "It can be applied to many different aspects of race relations in this country."

While he expressed gratitude, he said it was a mistake for Western Reads not to make

it a mandatory part of the curriculum.

"We're very busy," Bernstein said. "A lot of people, if there's no motivation to read it, won't."

Freshman Meghan LaVelle read their class pick "Tulalip, From My Heart" for Fairhaven 201: Indigenous Women of the World. She said she would not have picked the book out herself.

"It was a good book to have, but if someone doesn't need it for class, then they're not going to read it," LaVelle said.

She said she sees promise in expanding the interaction with books in the classroom setting. In regards to "Octavia's Brood," she likes that there is a fictional aspect which could attract more people.

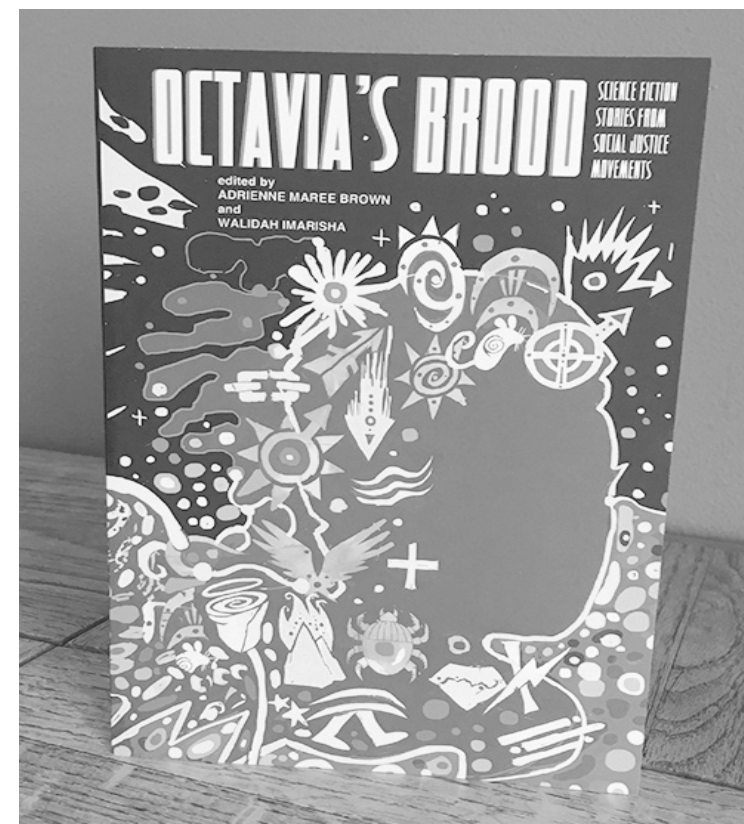
Right now, Western Reads partners with the Pickford Film Center, Village Books and the Whatcom Museum, along with hosting many formal and informal discussions about the yearly book.

"We want to create a space where students can have more of a presence in programming ideas instead of it being completely ironed out in the beginning," Seales said.

Ware said they will be looking for students, staff and faculty who want to join the Western Reads committee starting Winter 2019. They will be hosting a session Wednesday, May 23,

at 4 p.m. for students to help them plan for the coming year.

To RSVP for the session, email Ware at Molly.Ware@wwu.edu. The event location is undetermined at this time.



"Octavia's Brood" will be given to every first-year student next year. // Photo by Brooklin Pigg

Western to introduce new Marine, Coastal and Watershed Sciences degree program



A Western research vessel collecting data in the San Juan Islands. // Photo courtesy of Andre Quesada and Shawn Arellano

Mia Steben
THE WESTERN FRONT

Western is establishing an undergraduate degree in Marine, Coastal and Watershed Sciences. The Washington Legislature approved \$1.3 million for the integrated program, according to the Washington Government Office of Program Research.

Jackie Caplan-Auerbach is the associate professor of the Western geology department and associate dean of the College of Science and Engineering. She said her and one of her colleagues proposed an oceanography major many years back.

"It wasn't the right time or the right proposal," Caplan-Auerbach said.

Years later, a faculty member from environmental science proposed another program that made its way to

legislation and was recently approved, she said.

"We have heard for a really long time among our students that they are interested in marine science and that they would like opportunities in [this field]," Caplan-Auerbach said.

She said that because there has not been a comprehensive program in marine science, faculty work in or near the ocean was portioned into different departments.

"We were kind of scattered all over," Caplan-Auerbach said. "We have wanted in some way to pull those interests together [into a] more cohesive approach to the studies."

This program provides students with opportunities to gain interdisciplinary background necessary to approach a lot of these problems, she said.

Before the program, stu-

dents identified a more traditional concentration in one department, such as biology or geology, Caplan-Auerbach said.

"I think we will be better suited to deal with the issues facing us in marine coastal science if we know some biology, ecology and geology," Caplan-Auerbach said.

She said one of the treasures of Western is Shannon Point Marine Center, which engages students in hands-on research at a high-caliber marine lab. Before this program they did not have the connectivity between the main campus and Shannon Point.

Brian Bingham, interim director for the marine center, has seen a growing student interest in marine biology over the years. Bingham said the number of Western applicants that wanted to pursue marine science in 2014 was 195 and

jumped to 300 by 2017.

"We've had calls from students who want to know how they can sign up. We are seeing inquiries through social media and university pages," Bingham said. "I don't think there will be a problem filling out the positions."

He said they do not know exactly how the program will come together.

"This is truly an interdisciplinary departmental program which is going to connect biology, geology and environmental sciences at the marine center," Bingham said. "You can imagine that it will be fairly complex, and how you develop a curriculum that bridges these various departments is new territory in many ways."

He said the general structure will include a cohort model, foundational courses and a capstone experience.

"There's a lot of ground-

work to be done here," Bingham said.

Caplan-Auerbach said because of the entities and colleges, they need to find a structure that will work well for all of them.

"All those details are the ones we've been taking up this year," Caplan-Auerbach said.

Sophomore Darby Finnegan is studying biology with a marine emphasis. She said she will most likely have graduated by the time the program is up and running, but that the program will provide many possibilities for future students.

"I think this major is a great opportunity for people who are really interested in actually attempting to answer questions that we have about the marine world," Finnegan said.

"There's so much we still don't know, and that's pretty exciting."

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Official says Washington state is a nuclear hotspot

Production of nuclear weapons has negative health and environmental effects on low-income neighborhoods



"If Washington state were a country, we'd be the third-largest nuclear weapons country in the world," Lilly Adams, security program organizer for Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility, said. Members of Adams' coalition met for a speaker training. // Photo courtesy of Lilly Adams

Mia Steben
THE WESTERN FRONT

The Whatcom Justice & Peace Center hosted a presentation on May 9 on the presence of nuclear weapons in Washington, and its negative impact on communities.

Presenter Lilly Adams is the security program organizer for Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility. Adams said she runs the anti-nuclear weapons campaign through a social and racial justice lens.

According to Adams, Trump's discretionary budget request for 2019 includes \$1.7 trillion of funding to the nuclear arsenal plans over the next 30 years adjusted with inflation.

Adams said that

individuals think of nuclear weapons as a Cold War-era issue, but it is just as important today due to the accessibility of nuclear weapons and the ability to utilize them.

"Washington state is nuclear hotspot and not a lot of people in Washington realize it," Adams said. "If Washington state were a country, we would be the third-largest nuclear weapons country in the world."

The process of creating and using nuclear weapons often hurts low-income communities and communities of color, according to Adams.

"We see indigenous people and minorities in colonized countries being exploited and harmed in order to produce nuclear

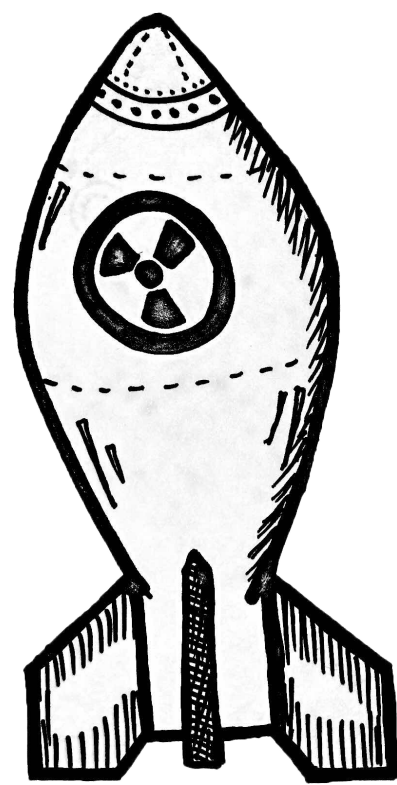


Illustration by Julia Furukawa

weapons," Adams said. "We see that these communities are still bearing the health and environmental burdens of this today, and they are not being compensated properly by the government."

Adams said the two takeaways are that nuclear weapon production hurts communities even without use and production of these weapons are being prioritized over our communities.

"The human cost is simply not considered," Adams said.

Neah Monteiro, executive director of the Whatcom Peace & Justice Center, said that any organizing around eliminating nuclear weapons needs to be informed by what's happening in

communities now.

"I really admire the work Lilly is doing to help the traditional nuclear abolition movement build awareness about what it means to be in solidarity with social justice movements," Monteiro said.

Monteiro said the most moving point of the presentation was the walkthrough of the nuclear weapons process and how communities of color are and have been most impacted.

Attendee Tracy Powell said his goal was to meet others who were involved in this issue.

"We have to get together and work together and to hear what these other folks are trying to do. It's such a huge task," Powell said. "It's going to take all of us working together."

DEAN
continued from page 1

that I certainly did not have prior to this work," Paredes said in an email. "I believe this will be extremely helpful in my role as dean as well."

Paredes said being the chair of the languages department has given her the chance to lead a diverse department. She said this will help her lead a "large and diverse college" like the CHSS.

Senior Lilly Parsons is a Spanish major and has taken many classes with Paredes.

"I'm not surprised at all about Paredes' appointment," Parsons said. "She is a wonderful professor with high expectations for her students as well as herself."

Paredes will succeed current dean Brent Mallinckrodt, who will be stepping down from the position at the end of the year, according to a March article by the Western

Front. His term started in April 2016.

Throughout Mallinckrodt's term, faculty had expressed concern over Mallinckrodt's performance, according to a July article by the Western Front.

Notably, the history department passed a resolution of no confidence in May last year. According to an email sent by Kevin Leonard, former chair of the department, the department was concerned about a lack of support

for diversity in faculty and curriculum, failure to advocate for department needs, a lack of transparency and a lack of commitment to shared governance with faculty.

Paredes said she plans to avoid a similar situation by openly communicating with everyone.

"Trust is something that I will need to gain and nurture with every step taken in this new position," she said.

She said she wants to communicate the "whys

and hows" of the decisions she makes as dean.

Paredes said she is excited to learn more about what faculty, staff and students in the CHSS see "as imperatives for the college, its departments and its programs to thrive."

"A dean takes a leadership role at both the collegiate level and the university level," Carbajal said. "Dr. Paredes' experience affords her perspective that will serve her well in both roles."

Local event aids British Columbia tribe's battle with pipeline companies



Donations will be used to fund the Unist'ot'en Camp's operational needs, as well as the construction of a Healing Centre. // Photo by Olivia Klein

Olivia Klein
THE WESTERN FRONT

The "Stop the Pipelines, Start the Music!" benefit dinner was held for the Unist'ot'en indigenous tribe on Friday, May 11.

Community members and advocates for the British Columbia tribe gathered for the event at the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship.

Freshman Annika Brinkley is one of these advocates and a member of Students for the Salish Sea.

In Canada, there's a significant amount of unceded territory belonging to indigenous peoples, which isn't legally given to them, Brinkley said. Multiple pipelines would go straight through their territory, and if they leak, it could destroy the water supply they depend on, as well as nearby marine wildlife.

"We're co-hosting this event, and it's a fundraiser for Unist'ot'en pipeline resistance camp," Brinkley said.

According to the event's Facebook page, proceeds from the event's auction, as well as donations gathered, will contribute toward helping the Unist'ot'en camp with its operational needs, as well as with the construction of the Healing Centre.

According to the Unist'ot'en Camp's website, the Healing Centre will offer traditional teachings and land-based wellness practices of the tribe's ancestors.

Freda Huson, a Unist'ot'en spokesperson, came down from British Columbia to speak at the event about the importance of the tribe's Healing Centre.

"We're hoping to bring healing to all our nation," Huson said. "Holistic healing in [the] spiritual, mental [and] cultural way of our people."

Daniel Patrick, an educator and community advocate for the Unist'ot'en people, is one of the many individuals who has put ex-

tensive time and effort into the camp and Healing Centre.

"I have been [to the Unist'ot'en camp] three times in the last two years," Patrick said. "I have put in approximately 40 days of volunteering. It's a very beautiful, special place and we're fighting to make sure that their land remains their land."

According to Patrick, although pipeline companies look at this land and see open space which they can negotiate with the government to receive permits, it's the Unist'ot'en people who actually hold rights to this territory.

"So it's kind of a classic fight between indigenous people for their land and their territory, and the integrity of their ecosystem and the forces of government," Patrick said. "There's money in petroleum, and if you have enough money, then law bends to suit you."

Brinkley said the fight is bigger than just the tribe against the pipeline companies.

"It's a human rights issue, and also just a human health issue," Brinkley said. "It really affects all of us."



The event is a fundraiser for the Unist'ot'en pipeline resistance camp on Friday, May 11. // Photo by Olivia Klein

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Bringing water to THE DESERT

It's been two years since residents of the Birchwood neighborhood lost their local grocery store and now they're calling for change

By
Colton
Redtfeldt
THE WESTERN
FRONT

a mile or more away from a supermarket, according to an article by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service.

Technically, Birchwood isn't a food desert. The former Albertsons building is about 0.7 miles away from the next nearest grocery store, a Haggen on Meridian.

But Birchwood residents say even though their neighborhood doesn't meet the federal definition to qualify as a "food desert," doesn't mean that there isn't a problem. The distance is still problematic for many people in the Birchwood area.

Getting food in Birchwood is especially challenging for residents who either don't have access to a personal vehicle, cannot spare time to make a lengthy commute to buy healthier foods, persons with disabilities, elderly folks and families with young children.

These people are forced to walk or use public transportation.

"We have to get on a bus to Fred Meyer if we want anything decent and since I use a walker, I can't walk that far," Sherry said. "So [my husband's] gotta push me in my wheelchair. It's inconvenient."

A 2017 study found that 9 percent of Birchwood households don't have a vehicle. Additionally, for Birchwood residents who don't drive, like the elderly, transportation becomes a constant issue.

Betty Ross lives at Birchwood Man-

or, a retirement home in the neighborhood. She said people in her community, particularly the elderly, have had trouble getting food since the closure.

For people who have trouble with mobility, the Whatcom Transit Authority offers a paratransit service. Riders can book paratransit rides for any type of trip, according to the WTA's website.

However, the service isn't ideal, according to Ross. She said the trips are often tedious and take a long time.

"By the time they go back and get you, if you had ice cream or milk, it wouldn't be good," Ross said.

Ross said that the community could benefit from a small store that provides basic necessities, like bread, eggs and milk.

According to the 2017 Enterprise Opportunity 360 study done by Enterprise Opportunity Partners, a national nonprofit organization, 49 percent of residences in Birchwood are classified as low-income and severely cost-burdened.

A residence is considered cost-burdened when they spend 50 percent or more of their income on housing and "may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care," according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The study found that the median household income is \$37,569 per year, compared to the regional average of \$53,145.

Marchelle Foglesong, who lives in Birchwood and takes care of her son who has special needs, was at the rally. She said she moved to her current residence because it was close to public transportation and healthy food options.

However, she said since the closure, she's had trouble getting food while also caring for her son.

"With him being handicapped I have a hard time getting him out to go to the stores with me," Foglesong said. "I either have to leave him alone or bring him out with me and with his mental illness it's challenging. Before, I could just come over here and get some fresh fruits and vegetables."

The effects of the closure radiate outside Birchwood too. The nearby Lummi Tribe has also been impacted by the lack of access to healthy food options in the area.

Tribal member Sheila LinFimble Fame Elvron Fair Sindica said many people in the Lummi Nation shopped at the Birchwood Albertsons.

"A lot of the Lummi Nation depended on Albertsons because it was an easy stop on the bus line and it had very reasonable prices," Sindica said. "It's very difficult for them to shop at other places because it's way out of the way for them."

Many people in the community have been worried about what is going to happen next. There has also been widespread doubt that the city will do any-

thing about the issue. Because of this, local groups have sprung up to help address the issue.

Now, just over two years have passed since the grocery store closed its doors on May 7, 2016. Members of the neighborhood and greater community gathered to share their concerns and voice their anger, commemorating the date.

The rally was organized by the Birchwood Food Desert Fighters, a group of "neighbors and allies working to address the food desert," according to their Facebook page.

The group holds periodic community meetings and protests, including a vigil every other Thursday at the former Albertsons lot. In addition, they host a community gathering every third Wednesday of the month at the Faith Lutheran Church on McLeod Road to discuss possible steps forward.

Tina McKim is a member of the Birchwood Food Desert Fighters.

"This isn't just about a grocery store," McKim said during a vigil on April 17. "It's about a grocery store in a poor neighborhood. It's about a grocery store in a diverse neighborhood. It's about farm workers who grow food all day then can't go and buy food themselves."

An Albertsons' spokesperson said the store was closed because it was underperforming, according to an article in the Bellingham Herald. After closing, Albertson's retained ownership of the property and made it available to lease.

At the end of March, the old Albertsons building was sold to the company GGD Oakdale LLC. They announced their intention to build a gym on the property. According to those at the vigil, this has created controversy in the neighborhood, as many people think a gym is unnecessary - particularly in comparison to a grocery store.

According to the Birchwood Food Desert Fighters, part of the lease includes a non-compete clause, which prevents another grocery store from going into the area until 2047. The clause is held among owners of Park Manor properties, according to April Barker, city councilmember for the Birchwood neighborhood. However, with the property under new ownership, there's an opportunity for the contract to be revised.

Alex McIntyre is a food system organizing fellow for Community to Community Development, a local nonprofit "dedicated to food sovereignty and immigrant rights," according to its website.

McIntyre graduated from Western with a degree in urban planning and development and said his job now is to talk to people in the community and gather input about what Birchwood



Eight-year-old Bijou Darrow protests passionately outside the lot where Albertsons used to be. // Photo by Colton Redtfeldt

residents want and need.

"We have knocked on hundreds of doors. Everyone was on board with the grocery store," McIntyre said. "Only one person has said a gym is something they'd like to see here."

McIntyre said some residents have even acknowledged the irony of a gym with little access to food nearby.

"There's comments on our Facebook page of people saying that they get enough exercise walking to the grocery store," McIntyre said. "That's the reality here."

Barker said the chances of a grocery store going into the old Albertsons building are small.

"A 40,000 square foot local grocery isn't even financially feasible anymore," Barker said. "I think we all knew from market demand that it wasn't likely it was going to turn into a grocery store again because they wouldn't have closed if they were successful."

Barker, who was one of the organizers who tried to keep the Albertsons open, said the Birchwood area does have local grocers people can go to, but they are small. These markets include Netos Market & Bakery on West Maplewood Drive and Mi Rancho Meat Market on Northwest Avenue.

Barker said along with city officials and the owner of Netos Market, a dialogue has been opened about ways to support the expansion of the market. Barker said residents want to find a way to bring in a store that would offer many options, but at the same time, they don't want to hurt these small

businesses by bringing in tough competition.

"How can we encourage [local stores] to increase their capacity with healthy fruits and vegetables?" Barker said. "That way we're not only helping people get access, but also supporting local business owners and business owners of color in our community."

Jesi van Leeuwen is a Birchwood resident and mother of five. She said she does around 25 percent of her family's grocery shopping at Netos, but doesn't think putting all the pressure on small business owners is fair.

"I don't feel like all of this pressure should lie on [the owner of Netos Market]," van Leeuwen said. "I don't think everyone should be looking at her and saying, 'OK, you're our local grocery store.' I don't think that's fair because she has her limitations and she has barriers that aren't her fault."

Barker said the city hasn't taken any steps to solve the food desert problem in Birchwood directly. Instead, they have supported efforts to expand food accessibility overall.

This support includes funding local food banks in Alderwood and at Christ the King Church, urging WTA to offer more routes through the Birchwood neighborhood and supporting local nonprofit organizations.

"I can totally see where the perception that we're not doing anything to solve the problem comes from," Barker said. "I don't know if we know what the problem is and who are the people and how much money we're going to put

towards it."

In response to what they see as a lack of action by the city, local groups have stepped up to support the Birchwood area.

Last summer, the Food Fighters operated a food market near the former Albertsons building every weekend. Local farmers donated produce and the Food Fighters would distribute it to residents for free. McIntyre said the group plans on expanding the program this summer due to demand.

As part of the expansion, the Food Fighters plan to work with a group, City Sprouts, to create a food stand in the parking lot of the former Albertsons. The food stand would allow residents to buy food from local farmers at a cheaper price than at the farmers market or a food co-op. McIntyre said residents would also be able to volunteer for shifts at the market in exchange for a box of produce.

Community to Community Development said they also want to give people the opportunity to grow their own food. McIntyre said the nonprofit currently owns a garden plot at the First Christian Church on East Baker-view Road, where they grow produce for the community. The group is trying to get more gardening plots designated for Birchwood residences to grow their own food.

"It's a lot of little things coming together," Barker said.



Members of the Birchwood Food Desert Fighters protest in solidarity at one of their Thursday vigils. // Photo by Colton Redtfeldt

AN INVASION OF PRIVACY

Facebook's recent security breach has social media users reconsidering where their data actually goes

By Isabel Lay
THE WESTERN FRONT

protecting their users' information. "We need to figure out ways to get people to use and apply security," Fretheim said. "If we design security that is uncomfortable to use, we can't expect people to use it."

The tendency for companies to

can't comprehend what they're signing up for.

The jargon used in many contracts means that many users just forego reading the terms and conditions altogether simply because they are so vague.

dent Technology Center employee Connor Hopkins said.

"It's funny, when I use Facebook I almost feel like there's this unspoken contract that like, 'OK, they're going to track me,'" Hopkins said. "I think maybe we've gotten complacent, maybe we've decided it's sort of okay that they track us a little bit."

Hopkins, who designs workshops for the STC and works on their website, said his concerns about cyber security have larger implications. He said the collection of information from the public without their knowledge undermines users' right to privacy.

That privacy is fragile, too. According to Tsikerdekis and Fretheim, once information has been released, it's virtually impossible for a user to get that information back. Thus, it's vital to be proactive about a security breach.

"Be more skeptical about the kind of apps that you authorize to access your Facebook account," Tsikerdekis said. "Be aware that they can access your network information, including your friends' information. I think that realization is difficult to make because part of this is also social responsibility."

"Be paranoid," Fretheim said. "Make sure that you have good passwords. Make sure that you're aware of what information you're actually sharing."

As for the future of tech security, Fretheim said he is not very hopeful.

"I think we're going to keep going the way we're going," he said. "We're going to have to somehow figure out other ways to bring people on board. That's going to be the real key."

Cambridge Analytica. March 2018.

In a massive security breach, millions of Facebook users' data was mined without their knowledge. This has prompted the computer science department at Western to research and answer the question: What do you do after a massive breach in online security?

"Run for the hills," Michael Tsikerdekis, an assistant professor in the computer science department, said.

Tsikerdekis, who specializes in cyber security and online deception, said he has devoted his research to trying to identify malicious social media accounts. That entails finding out what suspicious accounts look like.

Tsikerdekis said part of the cause of security breaches seems to be that the focus in the tech industry has shifted from caring for users' data to trying to develop the most current technology.

"Most companies want to get ahead by developing new, innovative stuff," Tsikerdekis said. "They put a lot of money into research and development, [but] the privacy-related aspects aren't studied to the degree that they should."

Erik Fretheim, director of the computer science program, said he agrees.

"[Cyber security] is a mess and it's been ignored for far too long," he said. "It all needs to be overhauled."

The issue of cyber security doesn't rest on users who may be accused of sharing too much on their social media accounts, Fretheim said. Instead, he said the finger should be pointed at companies that do not put time into pro-

create long, drawn-out terms and conditions contracts that confuse users contributes to this. Critics say many users can't be expected to understand what is being shared if they

Additionally, even if users are aware of the extensive sharing of their data that goes on behind closed doors, there is a chance they would rather just look the other way, Stu-



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Climate change might mean impending doom for Ethiopian coffee



or Harrar regions. It doesn't get too hot in the summer or too cold in the winter there."

It's not just those in the coffee business who will miss Ethiopian coffee, either.

Senior Irena Marx Gelder said she prefers Ethiopian coffee over all other beans.

"Ethiopian coffee is a little richer than other coffee," she said. "It has more of a cocoa taste, in my opinion. There's so many big companies that use Ethiopian beans for their coffee, so they're going to lose a lot."

One of those companies is local chain Woods Coffee. Director of Coffee Shea Hagan said Woods buys coffee from various countries, including Ethiopia.

Hagan said representatives from Woods go to the farms and build relationships with the producers. Hagan said they do so because the company wants to make sure what they are buying is having a positive impact on the producer and their community.

World Coffee Research, a nonprofit research program, is continuing to work to battle the threat climate change poses to coffee plants by researching the plant and conducting experiments, educating coffee farmers and creating climate and disease-resilient coffee plants.

By Kenzie Mahoskey
THE WESTERN FRONT

The rich aroma and taste of Ethiopian coffee may not last forever. Ethiopia, the fifth-largest producer of coffee in the world, could lose up to 60 percent of its farmland by the end of this century, according to CNN. Low rainfall and rising temperatures caused by climate change have been cited as some of the main culprits for making this land unusable.

According to Specialty Coffee, a nonprofit association, the rising temperatures make the coffee beans ripen too quickly and lose their rich flavor.

"Think of it as a cherry that grows on a tree. The coffee bean is really just a pit in the fruit," Ryan Siu, owner of Black Drop Coffeehouse in downtown Bellingham, said. "It's an actual agricultural product, which is one of the reasons why climate change is a big deal for coffee plants."

The 2016 World Coffee Research report said the demand for coffee will double by 2050, but the land for coffee farming will have shrunk by half.

Thousands of different kinds of coffee plants grow in Ethiopia. The coffee plants can either be processed naturally, where the cherry is dried around the coffee bean before being removed, according to Specialty Coffee's website. This process gives the coffee a heavy fruit and wine flavor. The other process is where the cherry is stripped from the coffee bean and gives it a floral aroma.

The high-quality Ethiopian coffee found at most coffee shops is Arabica, a coffee plant species. Siu said this plant is the most affected by climate change because it grows at high altitudes.

"Coffee grows in a magical area near the equator," Siu said. "Some of the best areas that grow coffee in Ethiopia are going to be Yirgacheffe



FRONTLINE

Opinions of the Editorial Board

The symbolic movement behind bringing Salish Sea orca home

Last week, members of the Lummi Nation and their supporters embarked on a journey from the Lummi reservation to Miami with a 16-foot orca whale totem pole in tow. The trip is part of the effort to bring Miami Seaquarium orca Tokitae back home to the Salish Sea, where she was taken from nearly 50 years ago.

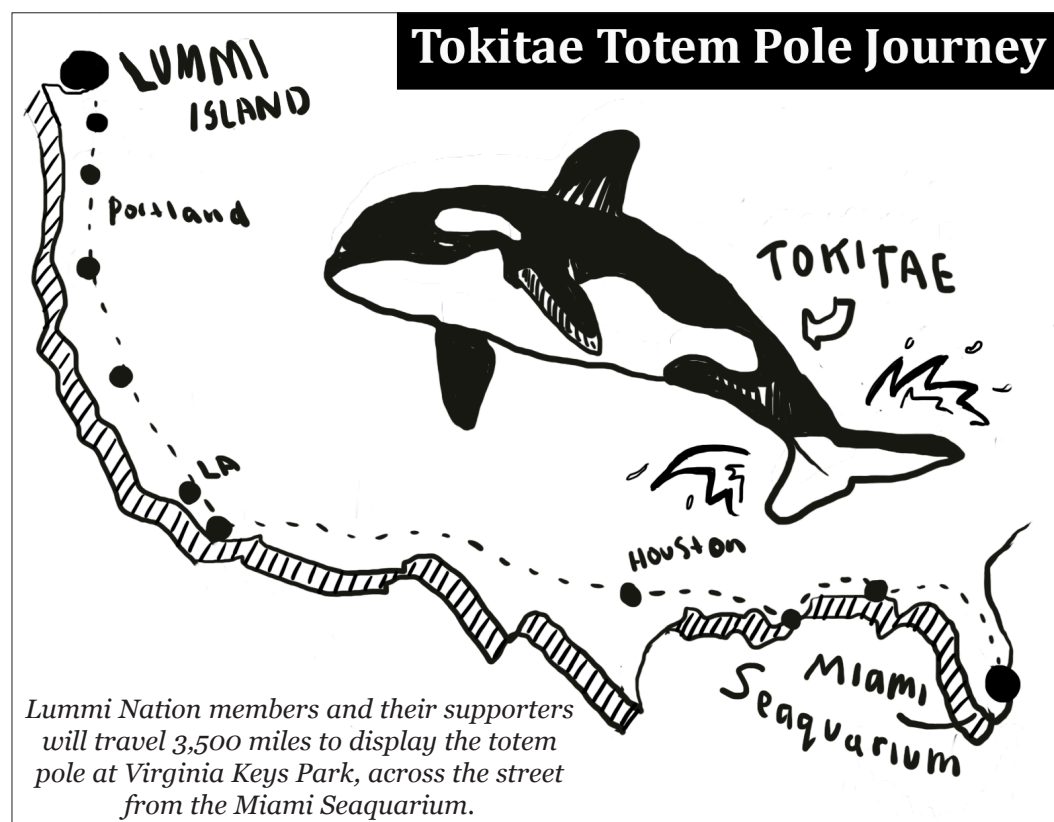
Lummi carver Jewell James will accompany his totem pole on the trip, stopping in major cities including Los Angeles and Houston to display the totem pole and gain support for the movement. The journey will culminate in a demonstration outside the Seaquarium at the end of May.

Miami Seaquarium released a statement citing concerns that returning Tokitae, whom they call Lolita, could endanger her life. Marine biologist Brad Hanson told NPR that it is unknown how the change would affect Tokitae, but said the biggest concerns would be a spread of disease from the Atlantic Ocean seawater Tokitae lives in, and another orca competing for food in an area where food is already scarce for orcas.

A guest column from the Orca Network submitted to The Islands' Sounder noted that in a January letter to the Seaquarium, members of the Lummi Nation said they had experts evaluate Tokitae's situation. The experts said they were concerned for her wellbeing in the aquarium and were confident that their plan for her rehabilitation was safe.

The Lummi Nation is the natural leader for this issue. In a guest column for the Bellingham Herald, Lummi Nation Chairman Jay Julius detailed the deep connection the Lummi people have with the orca whales of the Salish Sea, their spiritual significance and the sacred obligation the Lummi people have to bring Tokitae home.

Indigenous people are the natural leaders for environmental and animal rights issues in general. "There's a lot



Lummi Nation members and their supporters will travel 3,500 miles to display the totem pole at Virginia Keys Park, across the street from the Miami Seaquarium.

Infographic by Sophia Greif

of reasons why first peoples are leading these movements," environmental activist and Saanich tribe member Paul Cheoketen Wagner told me in a January interview. "It's just who we are."

For Wagner, environmental activism relates to the deep connection indigenous tribes have had with nature for centuries. "It's about rekindling the understanding that has always lived on these lands," he said.

Obviously, the more support and attention these issues get, the better (for environmentalists, anyways). But for white people looking to get involved, it's extremely important to be able to support indigenous-led movements without holding the space that should be held by indigenous people, and without talking over their voices.

In order to deviate from the long history of colonialism in this push for equality, it is necessary for non-indigenous people to avoid inserting themselves into spaces that do not belong

to them and speaking over the voices that matter most.

Western's chapter of Students for the Salish Sea makes a point to do this. They focus on many indigenous-led movements and issues like pipeline protests while working to emphasize that the movements are, in fact, indigenous-led.

They have had Tokitae proclamations at meetings, gathering student signatures on petitions to bring Tokitae home and turn the Salish Sea into a whale sanctuary. Students from the club also attended a ceremony last week to start off the totem pole journey.

Taking Tokitae from her pod in the Salish Sea and holding her in captivity 3,500 miles away parallels the injustices and abuse felt by indigenous people since colonizers set foot on what we now call the United States hundreds of years ago.

The similarities are not lost on tribal members, who compared Tokitae's

captivity to times when indigenous children were kidnapped and sent to boarding schools in a recent Seattle Times article.

This year, we celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day 50 years after he was assassinated. We dress kids up in pilgrim costumes and tell them happy stories of indigenous people teaching them to live off of the land. When the word "racist" comes up, it is often in a conversation about racism against black people, Latinx and even perceived racism against white people.

But racism against indigenous people is talked about much less often. The Washington Redskins still have not changed its name. Each November, we carry on a tradition that some believe originally celebrated a massacre of indigenous people.

We're obviously not a society free of racism, and we may never be. But it's a good thing to work toward. We live in a society where it's generally accepted that racism is not a value we should hold as a culture.

White solidarity and support is an integral part of moving forward and beginning to heal the intergenerational trauma that colonialism and racism has caused. It is also critical to allow indigenous people to dictate what they need from others to begin that process.

Non-indigenous people should join in support with the indigenous leaders pushing to bring Tokitae home, because Lummi Nation members say this will be the start of healing the Salish Sea, which Julius says the Lummi way of life is dependent on.

Bringing Tokitae home is a feasible way to begin repairing the damage of centuries of hurt done to indigenous tribes by colonizers and their descendants. The effort to free Tokitae isn't just about bringing a whale home — supporting the Lummi people in this fight means standing in solidarity with indigenous people.

Women's Ultimate Frisbee headed to nationals

Mia Steben
THE WESTERN FRONT

The Western women's Ultimate Frisbee club is heading to nationals for the third time in 19 years. This year's nationals are in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on May 25-28.

They attribute their success throughout the season, to hard work but more importantly teamwork.

"Our team goal [is] to put the team first, work hard to get better on and off the field, show and accept unconditional support in order to be competitive at nationals," senior captain TianQing Yen said.

Yen said they work from a place of support, trust and love. She said it's not about winning every game but teaching her teammates and continual improvement.

The Ultimate club has seen more than just improvement in recent years. Although established in 1999, they later titled themselves as Chaos and added a less-competitive team named Nyx in 2014. For Chaos, they focus on improvement, support and friendship.

"We spend a lot of energy supporting each other in addition to also challenging ourselves to get better, be stronger and work outside of practice," Yen said.

Yen said, "The challenge we face in any game or any practices, the frustra-



The Western women's Ultimate Frisbee club, Chaos, will play in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on May 25-28. Chaos is comprised of 23 players. // Photo courtesy of Ruby Cassidy

tion we feel, every moment is a learning opportunity. We are trying to get better, so we can do well at nationals."

Chaos is comprised of 23 players who invest time and energy into every practice and every tournament.

Sophomore Ruby Cassidy said there is a high level of competitiveness in the program. Cassidy said playing is intense and traveling adds more pressure because it comes out of pocket.

In addition to tournaments and weekly track workouts, Chaos practices twice a week with four-hour practices on Saturdays, Cassidy said.

"It definitely pushes me to be motivated and also work harder and try harder for the team," she said.

Chaos players are also encouraged to throw and lift during the week, Cassidy said.

Cassidy shared what keeps her motivated during the season.

"I love the people. I used to play for the competitiveness, and I still do, but I play for the community that frisbee brings in my life and to get better," she said. "I can always improve. Team-wise, it's incredible to see the improvement we go through together and what tournaments we win and what we lose."

Head Coach Alyssa Weatherford said the team had to adjust to being competitive at nationals as part of the goal, since they don't qualify for nationals often.

"It was an interesting hurdle to get over, but we had other parts of our team goals that were supporting each other no matter the score of the game and putting the team first," Weatherford said.

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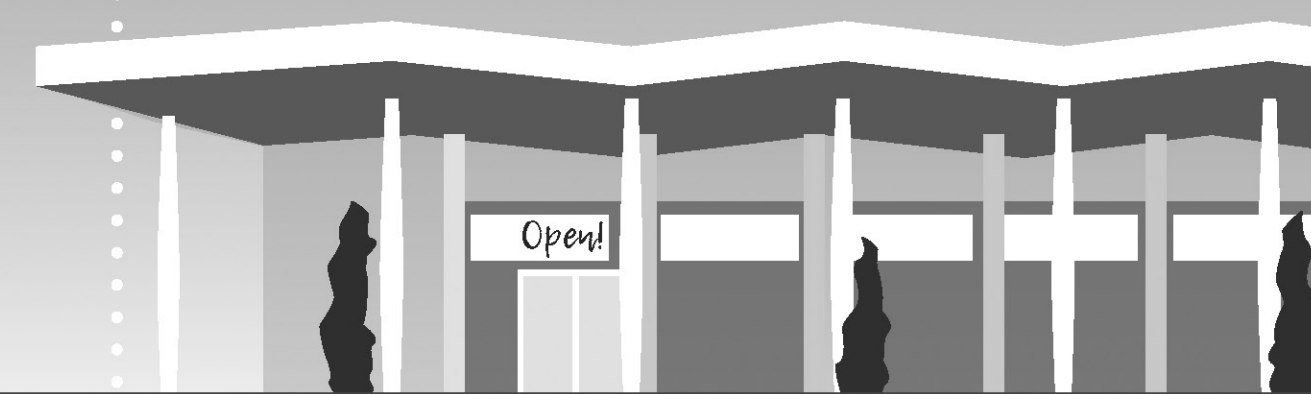
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Letter to the editor: Western needs an Arab-American studies minor

This letter was received March 21, 2018. Letters to the editor can be sent to westernfrontonline@gmail.com.

Western Washington University is striving to bolster its record in diversity, and I believe adding an Arab-American ethnic studies minor will help achieve that.

By Western becoming one of the first universities across the U.S. to implement it, Western's range of ethnic American studies will become more inclusive for Arab and Arab-

American students.

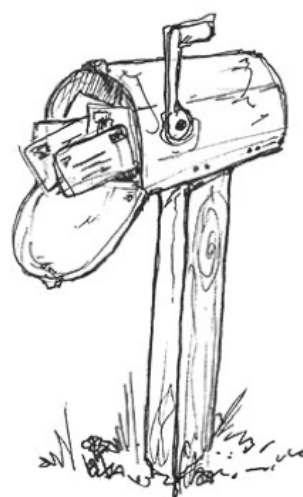
It is important for Western to continue supporting its ethnic students on campus, and an opportunity has emerged for Western to do so.

With today's political arena on its fringes, it is vital for the board at Western to show its support towards Arab and Arab-American students. This will prove how invested Western is, not only in its support towards Arab and Arab-American students, but also in its ability to enable those interested in the culture and language to receive a proper

education on the matter.

The recent creation of the Arab Student Association and its immense turnout for its first meeting shows that the proof is inside the pudding. There is interest from students and faculty alike for the creation of the minor, therefore Western has no reason not to capitalize and lead universities across the country by creating an Arab-American ethnic studies minor to add to its arsenal.

- Sofian Mahmoud,
Western student



From Mount Baker to Bellingham Bay

The annual Ski to Sea race is in its 46th year, but has a new twist this time around

Grace McCarthy
THE WESTERN FRONT

Ski to Sea, Bellingham's 93-mile relay race that starts on Mount Baker and ends in Bellingham Bay, is gearing up for its 46th year on May 27.

There are seven outdoor sports that make up legs of the race: cross country skiing, downhill skiing, running, road biking, canoeing, cyclocross biking and kayaking.

This year, for the first time, racers can compete in up to three legs of the race.

While competitors are training to cross the finish line, Race Director Anna Rankin is competing in a race against deadlines of her own. Rankin began working on the budget and marketing for Ski to Sea in November and by January she was working 40 hours per week on the one-day event.

"What was unexpected to me was just how much goes into it, how much of my work week is consumed with it and how many little details and things there are and need to be followed up on to make it happen," Rankin said.

Rankin worked to obtain nine different permits from different entities, hire photographers, contact landowners whose land the race goes through and structure traffic control plans. Rankin's weekends are also comprised of trips to expos in Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.

Last year 318 teams tested their athletic abilities in the race. Rankin estimates between 350 to 360 teams will compete this year.

The cap for teams is set at 500 but Ski to Sea hasn't seen those

participation numbers for almost a decade. As the price to put-on the race climbs, the number of participants has ebbed.

According to Rankin, the cost for teams has approximately doubled in the past decade. This year, the price for a standard team cost \$599 before March 1, and then was raised to \$649 after that date.

Bills like a \$22,000 insurance policy for just the race day have contributed to this. Rankin said she doesn't necessarily believe lower numbers is a bad thing, as 500 people starting the ski leg is a lot.

Whatcom County residents make up roughly 40 percent of racers, Rankin said. Out of the 2,500 competitors last year, 349 were from out of the state or country. There are logistical challenges for racers from out of state as they have to find a means of getting the gear or bringing it with them.

Every year about 40 percent of competitors are racing in Ski to Sea for their first time.

"The fact that there's still such a huge contingent of people who do it year after year but constantly an influx of new people that do it is pretty amazing," Rankin said.

The big change this year is racers can now participate in up to three legs of the race. So far, about 40 people have signed up to do two legs and no one has signed up for three legs. Rankin doesn't expect this to increase the number of injuries.

According to Rankin, there are only about two to three injuries that occur each year. Most injuries occur on the ski or bike leg.

"For me, just when the race is over and everyone's had a great time



The start of the Ski to Sea race is on Mount Baker, as racers ski uphill. // Photo courtesy of Anna Rankin

, and I know that everyone's made it back safely, that's what makes it all worth it for me," Rankin said.

Ashlee Carstens, volunteer coordinator for Ski to Sea, works to ensure Ski to Sea has as close as possible to the 800 volunteers needed to run the race.

"I think the best part of getting this job and working with Ski to Sea is meeting people, becoming a part of the community a little bit in more of a deeper connection to people in the community," Carstens said.

Volunteer jobs are just as varied as the terrain on the race course.

The first volunteers arrive at 5 a.m. to set up the ski course at Mount Baker and the last volunteers to leave are those watching the kayakers race to the finish line in Marine Park that evening.

Carstens estimates around 5 to 10 percent of Ski to Sea volunteers are Western students and hopes to recruit more student volunteers.

For Carstens, the best part is the philanthropic aspect of Ski to Sea.

"All the work that we're doing here is great, creates community, helps people meet each other, promotes people exercising and trying out new sports," Carstens said. "But in the end it's so awesome we get to give money to organizations who really need it."

According to the Ski to Sea website, the organization has given \$61,300 to local non-profits since 2014.

Junior Sam Mckee, a former third place winner in the junior Ski to Sea, will return this year to lead his team compiled of Yeager's Sporting Goods employees across the finish line.

Mckee's team solidified their spot in the race earlier last month. He hasn't started training on the Nooksack River course but is no stranger to paddling on the lake.

"I think it's the whole community involvement more than the actual athletic competition for me," Mckee said. "I'm not really 'in it to win it.' I'm doing it more for fun."

Mckee plans to continue compet-

"This is the 46th year and I'm already just gearing up and getting excited for the 50th."

Anna Rankin
Race director

ing in Ski to Sea in the future.

Rankin and Carstens aren't going anywhere, either.

"It's amazing being a part of something so iconic that's been happening for so long," Rankin said. "This is the 46th year and I'm already just gearing up and getting excited for the 50th."

Whatcom County farm offers goat yoga

Naomi Schapiro
THE WESTERN FRONT

Picture this: You stretch your arms, going deep into child's pose. Finding your zone, you haven't felt this relaxed in a long time. You are stretching deeper and deeper and – something starts nibbling your hair.

It's a goat, because you're at Goat Boat Farm in a goat yoga class.

The 15-acre flower farm off Highway 9 is about a 40-minute drive southeast of Bellingham and has two options for yoga classes this season, which start at the beginning of June.

The weekend class is a three-hour event. It includes an hour of yoga, transition time, a vegetarian lunch with fresh ingredients from the farm, a handmade flower crown and a bouquet of flowers for a total of \$55.

Farm owner Nicole Schierberl started rejuvenating the farm and the soil about four years ago. That's when she decided to get goats to help clear the blackberries.

When she was stressed, Schierberl said, she would play with the goats and call it goat therapy.

Playing with the goats would make all of her stresses and worries melt away, Schierberl said.

Schierberl also worked part time at another farm with Stormie Romero, a certified yoga instructor. When someone mentioned to Schierberl last year that goat yoga was becom-



Volunteer Heather Williams cradles one of the therapy goats at Goat Boat Farm. // Photo courtesy of Heather Williams

ing a thing, she immediately asked Romero if she would be interested.

It was perfect for Romero, who has a lot of other jobs to balance, because working with Schierberl would allow her to have a flexible schedule.

So they gave it a go last summer,

from June to August 2017.

"We just did it kind of as an experiment," Schierberl said. "We didn't expect it to necessarily take off. I wouldn't say that we didn't know what we were doing."

But, Romero said, "It was a sensa-

tional success."

Most people came because it was a trendy, once in a lifetime thing to do, Schierberl and Romero said. But it was astonishing to see the change in people throughout the class.

"It was so sincere and meaningful," Schierberl said. "We had people that you could just tell, they never sat outside, never interacted with animals, and they would come and just melt. People cried, people laughed."

They said it was not unusual for one or two people to burst into tears in the middle of class, in a joyful, "This is life, and I am here in this moment" way.

The yoga they do is yin yoga, a calm, meditative type of yoga that the goats respond well to.

"How often do people spend time with dogs or sheep or goats?" Romero said. "So you get these little bundles of just silly joy. It is impossible not to feel your heart cracking to let the light in."

Romero said she makes sure people who have never done yoga are comfortable, while still making it challenging enough for experienced yogis.

Goat Boat Farm has local, student and group discounts as well as offering the opportunity to trade work on their farm for a discounted price on yoga. It also has the option of doing a weekday class in the evening with just yoga for \$20.



Zuanich Park in Bellingham is filled with kayakers before the kayaking portion of Ski to Sea. This year's race is on Sunday, May 27. // Photo courtesy of Anna Rankin

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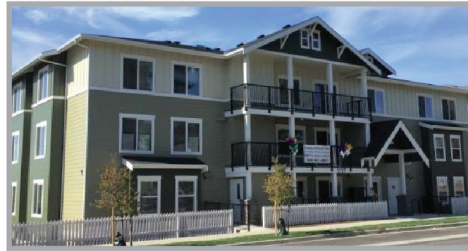
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